

Application No. 10/709,288
Technology Center 1775
Amendment dated May 21, 2007
Reply to Office Action dated March 20, 2007

REMARKS

As of the filing of the present Office Action, claims 1-16, 41, and 43-48 were pending in the above-identified US Patent Application. In the Office Action, the Examiner maintained rejections of all claims under 35 USC §103 as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,410,148 to Eaton, Jr., et al. (Eaton '148) alone, U.S. Patent No. 6,254,935 to Eaton et al. (Eaton '935) alone, Eaton '935 in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,352,790 to Eaton et al. (Eaton '790), Eaton '148 in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,299,988 to Wang et al. (Wang), Eaton '935 in view of Wang, and/or Eaton '935 in view of Eaton '790 and Wang.

In maintaining the rejections, the Examiner stated Applicants had the burden of coming forward with "evidence establishing an unobvious difference between the claimed product and the prior art product." The unobvious difference is that Applicants claim a protective coating of which at least an outer surface region "contains sealed porosity," whereas the prior art does not disclose or suggest coatings containing sealed porosity. While the Examiner points to the prior art for disclosing protective coatings that undergo heat treatment, Applicants teach that a second heat treatment is required to volatilize a "nonstoichiometric second crystalline phase" inherently present in

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the prior art coatings and then seal the resultant porosity (Applicants' specification at paragraph [0035]). Because the prior art lacks any suggestion for a second heat treatment, the prior art does not disclose or suggest Applicants' claimed product or a process that could produce Applicants' claimed product.

Applicants believe the above addresses the Examiner's request for evidence establishing an unobvious difference, and therefore respectfully request withdrawal of the rejections.

Should the Examiner have any questions with respect to any matter now of record, Applicants' representative may be reached at (219) 462-4999.

Respectfully submitted,



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